

# BONDINGS

Vol. 38 No. 2

A Publication of New Ways Ministry

Spring 2019

## Pope Francis Meets with LGBT+ Catholic Pilgrims in St. Peter's Square

By Robert Shine

*Bondings 2.0*

www.NewWaysMinistry.org/blog  
March 12, 2019

In an historic moment for the Catholic Church, members of a pilgrimage for LGBT+ Catholics and their families met with Pope Francis last week and participated in an Ash Wednesday service he led.

Following last Wednesday's morning audience in St. Peter's Square, the pope was introduced to pilgrims with the LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council group from the Diocese of Westminster (London). A press statement from the group explained:

"The Pilgrimage Leader, Martin Pendergast, a member of the LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council, introduced the group to the smiling Pope Francis, explaining that they formed part of the LGBT+ pastoral ministry outreach of Westminster Diocese. . . Each pilgrim received a gift of a rosary from Pope Francis who shook hands with the group's members.

"Later, on Ash Wednesday afternoon, the group was able to take part in Pope Francis' Mass & Imposition of Ashes in the Church of Santa Sabina. In the evening the Group was warmly welcomed at an Ecumenical Liturgy of the Word & Blessing of Ashes with English-speaking

Anglicans, Catholics and Methodists, in the Church of St. Ignatius."

Pendergast, who has organized and led two previous LGBT+ pilgrimages to Rome, commented to *Bondings 2.0*:

"We were taken completely by surprise to be told that we were going to have our photograph taken with Pope Francis. Although we had asked Cardinal Vincent Nichols' office to obtain Papal Audience tickets for us, we certainly hadn't requested this – not even thought about it!"

Another pilgrim, who had attended previous pilgrimages with the group, said, "This just keeps getting better and better!"

The LGBT+ Catholics Westminster pilgrimage also included Masses at several significant churches in Rome, and remembered victims of homophobia and transphobia at a morning prayer service at St. Bartholomew-on-the-Tiber, a



Pope Francis with pilgrims from LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council

church which commemorates modern martyrs. The group also met with Rome-based journalists, Christopher Lamb of *The Tablet* and Robert Mickens of *La Croix International* for perspectives on Pope Francis' Church reform strategy. They also met with American moral theologian, Professor James Keenan SJ, to learn more about the pope's response to the 2014/2015 Synods on the Family.

Francis' personal encounters with

LGBTQ people, like meeting these pilgrims, have been a defining and more positive aspect of how he treats issues of gender and sexuality. The pope previously met with a transgender man from Spain who was excluded from his parish, with a former student who is gay, and with a French youth injured while defending a gay couple from a hate crime. In 2015, pilgrims with New Ways Ministry received VIP seating during the Ash Wednesday papal audience.

Pope Francis' record is mixed. But with the sixth anniversary of the pope's election tomorrow, LGBT advocates should not lose sight of the progress that has been made. It was unthinkable in 2012 that a pope would meet with a pilgrim

of LGBT Catholics and their families. Now we have a pope who expresses welcome to all, even if imperfectly, and perhaps more importantly, allows for groups like LGBT+ Catholics Westminster to do the work of building an inclusive Church. Martin Pendergast and the English group should be applauded for their faithful efforts from which the Holy Spirit has produced the great fruit of this bridge-building moment. ✚

## 'We are all children of God,' nun writes allowing same-sex union news in alumnae mag

By Joe Heim

*The Washington Post*  
May 13, 2019

The letter landed in email inboxes early in May, and since then, students, parents and graduates of Washington's prestigious Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School have talked of little else. It has been the subject of spirited discussions, emotional exchanges, fervent Facebook posts.

Sister Mary Berchmans, the school's president emerita, wrote the letter that has provoked so many reactions.

In her carefully worded missive that emphasized following "the Gospel commandment of love," Berchmans said the 220-year-old Catholic girls academy will publish announcements of same-sex unions in its alumnae magazine.



Sister Mary Berchmans

The decision, which stands in contrast to official church teaching on same-sex marriage, was greeted with a mixture of responses by the school community. Some called it "beautiful" and "overdue." Others labeled it a "great disappointment." In some quarters, there was unhappiness it took so long for the school to reach this point, while a smaller number expressed anger that the school was veering from Catholic doctrine.

The school's decision followed a push last month by several hundred graduates who learned of an alumna who was told a few years ago that she could not have her marriage announced in the publication because it was a same-sex union. The graduates formed a chat group on

Facebook to discuss the issue and urge the school to change its policy.

In her letter, Berchmans, who graduated from Visitation in 1948 and was its headmistress for many years, wrote, "Recently, a Visitation friend invited me to reflect upon what it means to Live Jesus in relationship with our LGBTQ alumnae."

That conversation — as well as "much prayerful consideration and thoughtful dialogue" — led the school to its new policy, she wrote.

In previous years, Visitation's practice was to deny requests by graduates to have their same-sex unions announced in the magazine. Occasionally, those announcements made it into the "Class Notes" section of the magazine without drawing attention, but officially they

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## LGBT Catholics Are a Reality: Theology Must Acknowledge Gender Science

By Craig A. Ford

*Commonweal*

December 19, 2018

A pair of developments in the fall of 2018 helped illustrate once more the need for an understanding of gender and sexual identity adequate to what we know about human sexuality. The first was the Trump administration's proposed modification of Title IX to define "sex" as either "male or female, unchangeable, and determined by the genitals that a person is born with," leaving all "disputed cases" to be resolved through genetic testing. This binary classification of sexual identity would impact nearly 1.4 million Americans who do not identify with the gender indicated on their birth certificates, prompting transgender and gender-queer persons (and those who stand with them) to characterize the proposal as transphobic and anti-LGBTQ+.

The second was the decision by bishops at the 2018 Synod on Young People not to include terms like "gay" or "LGBT" in the synod's final document when discussing theologies relevant to persons who identify somewhere along the LGBTQ+ spectrum, or simply as "queer"—even though the former

term was used in the gathering's preparatory documents. . .

Of course, when it comes to the Catholic Church's conversation about queer persons, there's nothing new about a conflict over something so small as how to refer to people who clearly already have shown a preference for how they would like to be named. But it has made it more clear than ever that the current theology of sex and gender has run its course.

Just consider how this theology typically, and predictably, is debated today. On the one side, we have comments like these from Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, writing against the use of the term "LGBT" in church documents:

"There is no such thing as an 'LGBTQ Catholic,' or a 'transgender Catholic,' or a 'heterosexual Catholic,' as if our sexual appetites defined who we are; as if these designations described discrete communities of differing but equal integrity within the real ecclesial community, the body of Jesus Christ."

On the other, we have the words of Fr. James Martin, S.J., writing in favor of the use of "LGBT" in church documents:

"Referring to L.G.B.T. people with

the name that most now use for themselves is part of the 'respect' called for by the Catechism. . . . Refusing to call a group by the name that most in the group prefer borders on disrespect. L.G.B.T. youth, who are often harassed, bullied and 'called names' are especially attentive to disrespectful language."

Two things are worth pointing out here. The first is that both of these statements reflect a recurring dynamic in the Catholic understanding of sexuality: the driving of a wedge between the "doctrinal" approach to queer persons, and the "pastoral" approach to queer persons. Chaput himself emphasizes the doctrinal

point driven home by Cardinal Ratzinger in 1986: homosexuality is not an identity. Rather, it is an adverse psychological condition. And on this logic—the same logic, by the way, that rightly grounds the conclusion that we should, for example, prefer the term "person living with

depression" to "depressed person"—we should not refer to persons in ways that may imply that they are essentially defined by something that they are, in fact, managing.

But this is a nonstarter for queer persons—something Martin realizes. Even if the teaching states that homosex-



Craig A. Ford

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Spring 2019

Vol. 38, No. 2

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*Bondings* is a seasonal publication designed to keep our subscribers informed of issues that pertain to LGBT people and the Catholic Church.

Founded in 1977, New Ways Ministry is an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic LGBT community and the institutional structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

New Ways Ministry seeks to eradicate prevalent myths and stereotypes about homosexuality and gender identity and supports civil rights for LGBT persons in society.

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## German Bishop: The Catholic Church Needs to Change Its View of Homosexuality.

**Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck**, of Essen, Germany, penned an editorial entitled "Let's Overcome Prejudices! The Catholic Church Needs to Change Its View of Homosexuality" for Herder Korrespondenz on February 19, 2019. Paulist Press provided the following translation:

"Few issues stir up more debate in the contemporary Catholic Church than the question of the moral evaluation of homosexuality. Globally, homosexual persons cannot be secure in assuming even a minimum level of human respect. The urgency of our need to focus on the moral assessment of homosexuality in the German Catholic Church comes from our Bishops Conference's claim not to exclude Catholic morality in its work on the MHG study on sexual abuse. Questions and concerns arise about whether some of the contents of our [Catholic] sexual teaching may have contributed to this disaster of sexual abuse by making some phenomena of human sexuality taboo subjects. This applies in particular to homosexuality, since we can assume that our negative ecclesiastical appraisal has contributed to a psychologically and institutionally unhealthy repression or even denial of this form of sexual expression.

Whatever connections need to be seen here, one thing is clear—namely, neither the heterosexual nor the homosexual orientation of a person as such can or should be thought of as the cause of sexual abuse. In the opinion of experts, there is also no internal connection between pedophilia and homosexuality. Thus, it is frankly outlandish to argue that the problem of sexual abuse could be solved by restricting priestly ordination to heterosexual men. It seems to me that such an approach would perpetuate and even strengthen the taboos that have already led to our deeply problematic intra-church repressions. Wouldn't it also nurture the dangerous illusion of having a simple remedy for such a complex problem as sexual abuse?

One thing is clear: all human beings are capable of deeply respectful and loving interpersonal relationships. To exclude whole groups of persons from such relationships is a prejudice that weighs heavily on those affected and ultimately contributes to discrimination against them or even to criminalizing them. In my judgment, there are well-grounded reasons for thinking that the mere repetition of previous perceptions and evaluations of homosexuality based only on natural law considerations contributes to the dramatic loss of credibility of Catholic sexual moral teaching even among believers closely connected to the church.

Today, humanizing sexuality—whatever its expression—must mean personalizing it. Against this back-

ground, Catholic moral teaching on this question will be intellectually marginalized to the extent that it avoids engaging with the experiences of human beings and the reflective human sciences.

This also means conducting the dialogue with the exegetical and moral theological learning of the last decades in such a way that does not preclude any progress in learning and knowledge from the outset. Only in this way can tradition remain a living reality, as it has been since the dawn of Christianity. Because a strength of Catholic theology is its insistence on the rationality of Christian morality along with its resistance to fundamentalist temptations of supposed "simple" answers, the Church's doctrine must not alienate itself from historical human existence and its in-depth knowledge.

For issues of sexual morality, particularly around homosexuality, this means clearly distinguishing the culturally temporal notions expressed in biblical statements about same-sex sexuality from the foundational and "transcendent" aspects of biblical ethics. This is the "Art of Distinguishing," by which we must discern what can still be asserted today from the complexity of the biblical tradition and the tradition of the Church. For we are right to expect the Catholic Church to seek what is good and truly human—which is where God's will comes to meet us—in all times and places.

Therefore, the Catholic Church can only be satisfied when, through in-depth knowledge of human sexuality, we overcome prejudices of bygone times that are still having a fatal effect. Specifically, for homosexual persons, "depathologizing" homosexuality means an overdue release from a history of sometimes immense suffering right up to the present time. In recent years, many conversations with concerned people have stirred my reflection, touched me deeply and led to a widening of my perspective. So, it is time now for us to have an ecclesial conversation about our perceptions and evaluations of homosexuality. We must conduct in such a way that the barely scabbed over wounds of past injuries are not ripped open again. This step is called for irrespective of [what we think about] the sensitive question of the church status of same-sex relationships and life partnerships. Above all, with respect to the subject of homosexuality, we should heed the confidence of the Second Vatican Council: "The humble and persevering investigations of the secrets of nature are being led, as it were, by the hand of God, even unawares, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are" (*Gaudium et Spes*, par. 36)." †



Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck

## More Positive LGBTQ Comments from Church Leaders

In addition to Bishop Overbeck's editorial (above), a number of leading church officials from around the globe have recently been making positive public statements about LGBTQ issues. The following are a sampling of these statements.



Bishop Dieter Geerlings

**In a December 2018 interview with a local newspaper, Bishop Dieter Geerlings, an auxiliary in Münster, called for the Church to bless same-gender couples who are civilly married:**

"I'm not for 'marriage for all,' but if two homosexuals enter a same-sex relationship, if they want to take responsibility for each other, then I can bless this mutual responsibility. . . This is valuable and praiseworthy, even if this bond is not in complete agreement with the church."

**In a January 10, 2019 interview with the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, Bishop Franz-Josef Bode of the Diocese of Osnabrück, the deputy chairman of the German Bishops Conference, said:**

"Even though 'marriage for all' clearly differs from the church's understanding of marriage, it is now a political reality. . . We have to ask ourselves how we should deal with people who tie this knot. Some of them are active in the church. So how are we going to accompany them with pastoral care and in the liturgy?... We could think about giving them a blessing."

**Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, and a close advisor to Pope Francis, said in a January 30, 2019 interview with *Stern* magazine, a leading German language publication:**

"Personally, I find it touching that at a time when marriage is losing its radiance, couples who feel and live homosexuality want that ultimate form of partnership." Schönborn added that "we have long accepted" the state allowing for civil marriage equality which recognizes same-gender couples in law, and agreed that, "if a parliamentary majority wants it, the state should do it that way." He was clear, however, that the Church's position on marriage is that it only exists between a man and a woman.

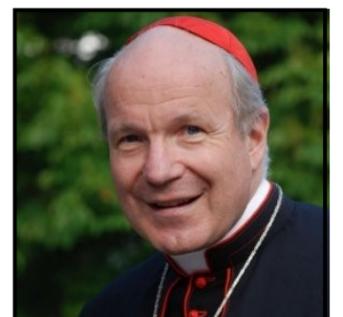
**In an April 17, 2019 interview with Anne Thompson of NBC-TV's *Today* show, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archbishop of Newark New Jersey, commented on church language about LGBTQ people:**

Thompson: "But how can you welcome people that you call 'intrinsically disordered?'"

Tobin: "Well I don't call them 'intrinsically disordered.'"

Thompson: "But isn't that the Catechism of the Catholic Church?"

Tobin: "That is. It's very unfortunate language. Let's hope that eventually that language is a little less hurtful."



Cardinal Christoph Schönborn

## LGBT Bar Association Director Offers Glimpse of Historic Vatican Meeting

By D'Arcy Kemnitz  
Bondings 2.0  
www.NewWaysMinistry.org  
April 23, 2019

On the morning of April 5, 2019, I arrived at the Vatican to meet with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's Secretary of State. He is responsible for all affairs of state and policy of the Vatican. I was part of a delegation from the International Bar Association that was granted an audience at the Vatican to discuss the global decriminalization of homosexuality and to urge leaders of the Catholic Church to actively support decriminalization.

This international legal delegation was composed of more than fifty leaders from dozens of organizations worldwide and included Mark Ellis, Executive Director of the International Bar Association; Baroness Helena Kennedy, the Director of the Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association; and the Honorable Michael Kirby, a Co-Chair of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute. Both Baroness Kennedy and Justice Kirby are known worldwide for their commitment to human rights. It was truly humbling to be included in this gathering of top legal scholars, human rights activists, barristers, attorneys, and eminent religious leaders.

Since I was raised in the Catholic Church, attending a meeting at the Vatican regarding official recognition of the rights of my community was deeply moving. The mere fact that the Church accepted this meeting and is committed to a dialogue to help end the animus against LGBTQ+ individuals demonstrates the great strides made by the Church to support civil rights for all people.

Our meeting was both inspirational and productive. The Baroness Kennedy gave a particularly poignant speech about the plight of LGBTQ+ people worldwide and urged the Vatican and its representatives to see our meeting as a beginning of a communication on this matter. Justice Kirby's account of his personal struggle to reconcile his sexual orientation with the secular law and with a powerful faith like Catholicism moved me to tears. Cardinal Parolin and his attendants promised to take these views directly to Pope Francis himself.

After the event, the Baroness, Judge Kirby and Attorney Leonardo Raznovich held a press conference that was followed by a lunch meeting in which all esteemed individuals including powerful allies like Former Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, among others, pledged to continue working against criminalization of our community.

As readers already know, criminaliza-

tion of homosexuality is a pressing issue globally and here in the United States. Seventy countries currently criminalize homosexuality. In the United States, twelve states still have anti-sodomy laws even after the landmark case *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) in which the U.S. Su-



Matthias Stupp, Co-Chair of the International Bar Association LGBT Committee, and D'Arcy Kemnitz, Executive Director of the U.S.-based LGBT Bar Association, after the Vatican meeting.

preme Court found a compelling dignity interest for LGBTQ+ people and ruled that the sodomy laws violate the U.S. Constitution's Equal Protection Clause. In the U.S., criminal sodomy laws or similar criminal provisions are still on the books in Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah. These laws continue to force LGBTQ+ people to live their lives in the shadows, under threat of criminal persecution, and relegate gay individuals to the status of second-class citizens.

It takes no leap of faith to tie these secularly abusive laws to subsequent hate crimes and criminal physical and mental abuse. We implore the Holy See to take a stand against criminalizing LGBTQ+ individuals.

LGBTQ+ individuals will never be truly equal—or safe—as long as these archaic and bigoted secular laws continue to exist. The LGBT Bar is committed to ending the criminalization of homosexuality nationally and internationally, and urges the Catholic Church to join us—and the other representatives and groups in our historic meeting. †

*D'Arcy Kemnitz is the executive director of the LGBT Bar Association.*

## LGBTQI Pilgrimage to World Youth Day Brought Hope to Thousands

By Catherine Buck  
Bondings 2.0  
www.NewWaysMinistry.org  
February 12, 2019

Last month, Pope Francis visited the Central American isthmus for the first time, landing in Panama for World Youth Day, the largest single gathering of Catholic young people on the planet. I was there, too, with a community of six pilgrims sponsored by Equally Blessed, a coalition of three Catholic organizations which work for LGBTQI equality (Call To Action, DignityUSA, New Ways Ministry).

We were there to advocate for the full rights and inclusion of LGBTQI people in the Catholic church. Our goal was mostly to meet with people, to be present and visible. We were standing as an intentional counter to any anti-LGBTQI official messaging, and seeing the Pope wasn't necessarily top on our list of priorities. The afternoon of his arrival, we were taking a break from the chaos of mingling with the excited crowds, leisurely eating gelato and reflecting on the day. Then we heard the raucous screams from just a few blocks away: airhorns and vuvuzelas and radio speakers. A few of us raced in the direction of the noise. Just as we rounded the corner and reached the crowd, there he went: the Popemobile a flash and a blur, the pontiff's face in focus for just a second.

We screamed and hugged, turned to the rest of our group in shock that we had reached the crowd at the exact right moment. "I'm shaking," said Breanna Mekuly, one of our pilgrims. "I didn't think I would care that much, but I did."

If we felt lucky at getting to see the pope, the majority of our week was spent being seen by others. Virtually everywhere we went, we wore rainbow sashes and often carried a wide banner proclaiming our mission: "Faithful Catholics committed to full equality for LGBTQI persons." The banner turned heads on bumpy side streets and on the wide highways designated for official World Youth Day gatherings. Sometimes we could barely move 10 feet in as many minutes because the crowds kept stop-

ping us. "I love your banner," they mostly said. "Can we take a picture?" We responded enthusiastically, gesturing for them to join us and adding, "Find us online, #equallyblessed!" These pictures of our sometimes sweaty and tired but always smiling group can now be found on the social media landscapes of dozens of countries. By the end of the week, we were going viral: people weaving towards us from across a packed field, asking, "Are you Equally Blessed? We've been looking for you!"

After each photograph, we gave out rainbow striped buttons which read "I am Equally Blessed" and "It's Our Church Too." I translated this for the huge numbers of Latin American pilgrims we encountered: Es nuestro iglesia tambien. We posted about the experience on our own social media pages, and we found a wider reach in LGBTQI Panamanians who were otherwise disconnected from World Youth Day. For example, we met the amazing founder of a support group for trans men, a gay couple who run a YouTube channel (and helped our message spread across the country), and a lesbian podcast host who spent a full day showing us around the old city.

While the overwhelming majority of people greeted us with enthusiasm, there were some pointed looks, murmurs, and a few discouraging incidents of critical questioning. Two mornings, we went to English-speaking catechesis, where a visiting priest would give a short lecture, answer some questions, and then lead the group in mass. These were spaces populated by more US Catholics than elsewhere at WYD. The vibe there was different: there wasn't a tremendous amount of outright hostility, but our group members sometimes felt we were on edge and were being stared down.

At our second morning of catechesis, we decided to participate in the question and answer session. One of our group, Meli Barber, got in line wearing her rainbow sash, mentally rehearsing a question at the heart of our trip: Where was the respect and compassion for LGBTQI people that the church professes it has for everyone? Just when it would have been her turn, they announced that the previous question was the last. It felt disappointingly predictable, but as she turned

to go, several people stopped to ask what she would have said. With their encouragement, she returned to the stage and asked once more to be heard.

Her question was carefully worded and from the heart: "What I love most about the Catholic faith is the dignity of all people. But what I feel as an LGBT person is that my dignity and the dignity of my family is not always respected. How would you respond to that?" The speaker's response was a general sentiment of caring, though without much in the way of concrete affirmation. Yet regardless of how he had chosen to respond, the true impact of Meli's bravery came after the session had ended. We were surrounded once again by supporters, grateful that she had spoken up. One in particular stands out: a group leader who hugged her and whispered that he too was gay, then took a button and pinned it to the inside of his shirt.

Meli, who left her job in church ministry to be able to marry her wife, later shared that the gay group leader's action reminded her of something she might have done years before. I thought then of how many people had been affected by her question, well beyond those who had gone out of their way to approach us immediately afterwards. I thought about the young woman we met on our very first walk through a Panamanian mall. She was in tears. That morning she had endured homophobic comments by a priest, but could hardly contain her joy at finding us there. I thought of the nun we

met moments later who took our rainbow buttons and distributed them to her entire group.

About midweek, I was asked how I could justify staying in the church, and I said that I didn't think I could without being part of Equally Blessed and without my writing at New Ways Ministry's *Bondings 2.0*. Catholicism has always been a home for me, but I can't justify being here if it can't become that home for everyone who wants it. Above this, though, I responded that this church is made up of much more than the hierarchy. It is the hundreds who came up to us with tears and joy, questions and blessings. It is the clergy who took our buttons and wore them proudly, it is the folks who saw us and did not come up but will remember that we were there. It is the incredible group I got to travel with, and it is the young people who will lead us into so much good to come.

At the opening ceremonies, Pope Francis recalled the words of St. Oscar Romero, saying: "A saint from these lands liked to say that, 'Christianity is not a collection of truths to be believed, of rules to be followed, or of prohibitions. Seen that way it puts us off. Christianity is a person who loved me immensely, who demands and asks for my love. Christianity is Christ.'"

There is plenty of work to do, but I left World Youth Day with a burning hope that Romero's vision can be true. †



Catherine Buck wearing her rainbow identifier at World Youth Day



Equally Blessed pilgrims with local Panamanian LGBTQI advocates.

## More Positive LGBTQ Comments from Church Leaders

(Continued from page 2)

**In October 2018, Monsignor Olivier Ribadeau-Dumas, secretary general and spokesperson of the Bishops' Conference of France, spoke to an LGBT Catholic group, *Becoming One in Christ*. Two European publications recently captured some of his comments:**

"I think there is something in every true love relationship that tells us of the love of God, whatever that relationship is. . . I know that if God is love and if two people really love each other, then there is something that is inevitably linked to that. . . A love that goes so far as to give one's life for one who loves, that love cannot fail to tell us something about God's love for us." (from *Riposte Catholique*, March 25, 2018)

On April 3, 2019, *Religion Digital* reported further comments from the event: "Things are progressing" in the Church as regards respect for homosexuals: "we just have to give them time," said the spokesman for the French bishops, adding that he hopes that gays will find more and more acceptance in the hearts of parishes, and not only in specialized pastoral ministries. "I understand how impatient you are, but let's give [the Church] time, it's reassuring, after all, it has progressed and there are more steps forward. In the heart of the Church, be love, love her, and from within,

help her to progress towards that love, that recognition, that love," Ribadeau-Dumas encouraged those present at the talk, paraphrasing Saint Teresa of Lisieux."

**In an April 13, 2019 *National Catholic Reporter* interview conducted by Italian journalist Giovanni Panettiere, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, retired auxiliary bishop of Detroit, made a number of positive comments about LGBT people:**

*Panettiere:* "According to Catholic teaching, a parent should tell his or her gay or lesbian child that homosexuality is 'objectively disordered.' Don't you think this idea would hurt that child?"

*Gumbleton:* "Yes. No parent should ever tell a child that he or she is intrinsically disordered. For the church to teach such a thing is insulting to the parent and child. I've had parents become very angry if that



Bishop Thomas Gumbleton in a mitre with a pink triangle, cross, and rainbow ribbon.

is even suggested, and I don't blame them."

This language of "intrinsically disordered," according to Gumbleton, makes the Church somewhat complicit in homophobia because it "creates fear, anger and causes people to make false judgments about LGBT people."

Gumbleton spoke personally about how his gay brother's coming out affected the bishop's own ministry. His seminary formation, Gumbleton said, left him "not prepared well" to minister with lesbian and gay people because he believed homosexuality

"was a choice and therefore a sin." He explained further in this exchange:

*Panettiere:* "Did you make mistakes, as a parish priest, in your pastoral accompaniment of gays and lesbians?"

*Gumbleton:* "Yes, because I heard confessions with the mindset of homosexual actions being sinful because the penitent

was choosing to go against nature. When I tried to counsel them, my counseling was of no help because according to the teaching, developing an intimate friendship with someone of the same sex would be a sin. My advice to them was to break off any such friendships because I felt that it was simply a choice and not a friendship that was based on their identity as a homosexual person. In fact, asking them to give up friendships, obviously, was not the right advice. Everyone needs close friends. I felt I was guiding them away from occasions of sin when in fact I was eliminating their opportunity for real friendships."

Asked if chastity was the only way for a same-gender couple to live, Gumbleton said he now believes he has "no right to interfere" in the conscience decisions of two people and the model for ministry in this regard should be Pope Francis who said, "Who am I to judge?"

**In April 2019, Bishop Georg Bätzing began a process in the Diocese of Limburg, to discuss blessings for people in relationships that cannot be married in the Catholic Church, including same-gender couples. He wrote a letter to church employees asking them to discuss the issue.**



### PARISHES

#### Alabama

*Decatur:* Annunciation of the Lord  
*Montgomery:* St. Bede

#### Arizona

*Glendale:* St. Thomas More  
*Mesa:* St. Bridget  
*Tucson:* St. Cyril of Alexandria,  
Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Pius X,  
Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Odilia

#### California

*Baldwin Park:* St. John the Baptist  
*Berkeley:* Holy Spirit Parish  
*Burney:* St. Francis of Assisi  
*Carlsbad:* St. Patrick  
*Camarillo:* Padre Serra Parish  
*Claremont:* Our Lady of Assumption  
*El Cajon:* St. Luke  
*Encino:* Our Lady of Grace  
*Escondido:* St. Timothy  
*Fremont:* St. Joseph-Mission San Jose  
*Fresno:* St. Paul Catholic Newman Center  
*Goleta:* St. Mark Univ. Parish  
*Hawthorne:* St. Joseph (Spanish)  
*Hayward:* All Saints  
*Huntington Beach:* Sts. Simon and Jude  
*La Puente:* St. Martha  
*Lemon Grove:* St. John of the Cross  
*Long Beach:* St. Matthew, Our Lady of Refuge  
*Los Angeles:* Blessed Sacrament, Christ the King, Mother of Good Counsel, St. Camillus Center-LA USC Medical Center (Spanish), St. Agatha, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Anselm  
*North Hollywood:* St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Patrick  
*Oakland:* Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Columba, St. Jarleth  
*Oceanside:* St. Thomas More  
*Orange:* Holy Family Cathedral  
*Palm Springs:* St. Theresa, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Solitude

*Pasadena:* Assumption of the B.V.M.  
*Redondo:* St. Lawrence Martyr  
*Redwood City:* St. Matthias  
*Ross:* St. Anselm  
*Sacramento:* St. Francis of Assisi  
*San Carlos:* St. Charles  
*San Diego:* Ascension, St. John the Evangelist, St. Jude Shrine, Catholic Community of UC San Diego  
*San Dimas:* Holy Name of Mary  
*San Francisco:* Most Holy Redeemer, Old St. Mary Cathedral, St. Agnes, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Teresa of Avila  
*San Jose:* St. Julie Billiart,  
*San Luis Obispo:* Mission San Luis  
*San Ramon:* St. Joan of Arc  
*San Raphael:* Church of San Raphael & Mission San Raphael Arcangel  
*Santa Barbara:* OL of Guadalupe  
*Santa Cruz:* Holy Cross  
*Santa Monica:* St. Monica  
*Spring Valley:* Santa Sophia  
*Stanford:* Catholic Community at Stanford University  
*South Pasadena:* Holy Family  
*Valinda:* St. Martha  
*Vernon:* Holy Angels Catholic Church of the Deaf  
*Walnut Creek:* St. John Vianney  
*West Hollywood:* St. Ambrose, St. Victor  
*Whittier:* St. Mary of the Assumption

#### Colorado

*Arvada:* Spirit of Christ  
*Avon:* St. Edward  
*Colorado Springs:* Sacred Heart  
*Denver:* St. Dominic, Christ the King, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Ignatius Loyola  
*Lafayette:* Immaculate Conception  
*Lakewood:* St. Bernadette  
*Littleton:* Light of the World, St. Frances Cabrini

#### Connecticut

*Guilford:* St. George's  
*Hartford:* St. Patrick-St. Anthony

#### Delaware

*North Wilmington:* Holy Child

*Wilmington:* St. Joseph, Sacred Heart Oratory

#### District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Matthew Cathedral

#### Florida

*Cocoa Beach:* Our Savior  
*Daytona Beach:* Our Lady of Lourdes  
*Flagler Beach:* Santa Maria del Mar  
*Ft. Lauderdale:* Blessed Sacrament, St. Anthony, St. Maurice  
*Key West:* Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea  
*St. Petersburg:* Holy Cross  
*Tampa:* Sacred Heart

#### Georgia

*Atlanta:* Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

#### Idaho

*Boise:* St. Mary

#### Illinois

*Berwyn:* St. Mary of the Celle  
*Chicago:* Immaculate Conception, St. Clement, St. Gertrude, St. Gregory, St. Peter, St. Sylvester, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thomas the Apostle, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Old St. Patrick  
*Clarendon Hills:* Notre Dame  
*Country Club Hills:* St. Emeric  
*Evanston:* St. Nicholas  
*Inverness:* Holy Family  
*Johnston City:* St. Paul  
*Morton Grove:* St. Martha  
*Oak Park:* Ascension, St. Catherine of Sienna-St. Lucy, St. Giles  
*Schaumburg:* St. Marcelline

#### Indiana

*Dyer:* St. Maria Goretti  
*Indianapolis:* St. Thomas Aquinas

#### Iowa

*Coralville:* St. Thomas More  
*Des Moines:* Holy Trinity

#### Kentucky

*Lexington:* Historic St. Paul Church, St. Peter Claver

*Louisville:* Epiphany, Cathedral of the Assumption, St. William

#### Louisiana

*New Orleans:* St. Augustine

#### Maine

*Portland:* Sacred Heart-St. Dominic  
*Saco:* Most Holy Trinity

#### Maryland

*Baltimore:* Corpus Christi, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius, St. Matthew, St. Vincent dePaul  
*Columbia:* St. John the Evangelist  
*Gaithersburg:* St. Rose of Lima  
*Hagerstown:* St. Ann  
*Severn:* St. Bernadette

#### Massachusetts

*Amherst:* Newman Catholic Center of UMass  
*Boston:* St. Joseph, Paulist Center, St. Anthony Shrine, St. Cecilia  
*Buzzard's Bay:* St. Margaret's/St. Mary's  
*East Longmeadow:* St. Michael  
*Medford:* Catholic Community at Tufts University  
*Newton:* St. Ignatius  
*Provincetown:* St. Peter  
*Sharon:* Our Lady of Sorrows  
*Springfield:* Sacred Heart  
*Whitinsville:* St. Patrick

#### Michigan

*Ann Arbor:* St. Mary Student Parish  
*Detroit:* St. Leo, Christ the King, Gesu Parish  
*Livonia:* St. Edith  
*St. Ignace:* St. Ignatius Loyola  
*Westland:* Ss. Simon and Jude

#### Minnesota

*Minneapolis:* St. Frances Cabrini, St. Joan of Arc  
*St. Paul:* St. Thomas More

#### Missouri

*Kansas City:* Guardian Angels, Holy Family, St. James, St. Francis Xavier  
*St. Joseph:* St. Francis Xavier

(Continued on page 5)

# LGBT Catholics Are a Reality: Theology Must Acknowledge Gender Science

(Continued from page 1)

sexuality constitutes a sort of “objective disorder” or that transgender identity somehow dishonors God as creator, such an approach will do nothing to increase the number of queer persons in our congregations. The term “LGBTQ+ Catholic,” at the very least, validates the experience that queer persons have of their own identities—it is not something they are “managing.” The use of the term assures queer persons that, regardless of how the theological conversation ends around sexuality, it nevertheless begins with each person on equal footing. In other words—and as Francis in his papacy has relentlessly pointed out through comments validating the experience of queer persons—there is no other approach to queer issues other than to maintain a humble respect for how queer persons experience their own embodiment. There is, then, no other approach besides a pastoral approach. Such is the way of mercy—indeed, such is the way of the Lord Jesus—that Francis is trying to model for us.

The second point to make is that this entire conversation about nomenclature distracts us from the conversation that we should be having, which is about how to bring our theology about gender and sexual identity into alignment with reality—that is, into alignment with what we

know about human embodiment and sexual experience. . . . Good ethics begins with lived human experience informed by the virtues of justice and equal regard, and by respect for better understandings of human embodiment that we’ve gained over time. Let’s begin here.

This means that we cannot talk about what the world should be like until we come to an understanding of what the world is like. The same goes for understanding gender and sexuality. And for an understanding of what gender and sexuality is like, we need to turn to scientists (though, of course, not exclusively to them) who study the phenomena that we are interested in. For homosexuality, the results have been in for decades: same-sex attraction, far from constituting a psychological disorder, is actually a normal trait observed in human sexual experience. And as Anne Fausto-Sterling, a professor of biology and gender studies at Brown University, pointed out in a recent column in the *New York Times*, the complexity of gender identity is something scientists have been learning about since the 1950s. The existence of transgender, genderqueer, and intersex persons challenges the notion that gender comes to us in a prepackaged binary. Intersex persons challenge this binary at the level of biological constitution; trans and genderqueer persons, at the level of

one’s psychological constitution. What do we know in 2018? Speaking specifically about intersex persons, Fausto-Sterling writes:

“An XX baby can be born with a penis, an XY person may have a vagina, and so on. These kinds of inconsistencies throw a monkey wrench into any plan to assign sex as male or female, categorically and in perpetuity, just by looking at a newborn’s private parts.”

The truth is that our theology of sex and gender does not reflect the actual world that God has created for us. It reflects, instead, an understanding from the world of another time. But more importantly, such a theology does not reflect a truly Catholic method of studying sexuality, which has typically come through the framework of natural law. The natural law, as an ethical framework, represents an approach to human flourishing that begins with an honest assessment of what it’s like to be humans running about in the world. This requires, in the case of understanding human sexuality, a broad consultation with scientific and philosophical approaches to human sexuality. . . .

But this is precisely what Archbishop Chaput seems not to want us to do. In the same speech in which he discouraged the use of “LGBT” within church documents, he also said the following:

“Who we are as creatures, what it means to be human, why we should imagine we have any special dignity at all—these are the chronic questions behind all our anxieties and conflicts. And the answer to all of them will not be found in ideologies or the social sciences, but only in the person of Jesus Christ, redeemer of man.”

To oppose “the person of Jesus Christ, redeemer” to “the social sciences” is to employ a dichotomy that the Catholic tradition cannot sustain. . . . It is one thing to disagree with scientific findings, but it is another thing to find them simply inadmissible. . . .

Just as the Trump administration threatens to undo decades of work in creating a more just world for queer persons, deferring to an understanding of sex and gender that doesn’t comport with the world in which we actually live, so we Catholics are exiling ourselves from the world with our current theological framework for making sense of sex and gender. We need to understand the trajectory of human sexual flourishing as one that maintains a critical openness to how researchers have been able to shed light on sex and gender identity over time. We should expect this from ourselves; we should expect it equally from our church’s leaders. ✦

(Continued from page 4)

*St. Louis:* St. Cronan, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Pius V

## Montana

*Billings:* Holy Rosary, St. Pius X

## Nebraska

*Omaha:* Holy Family, Sacred Heart, St. John Parish (Creighton University)

## Nevada

*Las Vegas:* Christ the King, Guardian Angel Cathedral

## New Hampshire

*Merrimack:* St. John Neumann  
*Pelham:* St. Patrick

## New Jersey

*Hoboken:* Our Lady of Grace  
*Keyport:* St. Joseph  
*Lawrenceville:* St. Ann  
*Long Beach Island:* St. Francis of Assisi  
*Maplewood:* St. Joseph  
*Monmouth:* Precious Blood  
*Pompton Lakes:* St. Mary  
*South Plainfield:* Sacred Heart  
*Tinton Falls:* St. Anselm  
*Turnersville:* Sts. Peter and Paul

## New Mexico

*Albuquerque:* Holy Family,  
*Espanola:* Sacred Heart of Jesus

## New York

*Albany:* St. Vincent DePaul  
*Baldwinsville:* St. Augustine  
*Bellmore:* St. Barnabas the Apostle  
*Bellport:* Mary Immaculate  
*Binghamton:* St. Francis of Assisi  
*Brooklyn:* St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Boniface, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, Immaculate Heart of Mary  
*Buffalo:* St. Joseph University Parish  
*Deer Park:* Ss. Cyril and Methodius  
*East Islip:* St. Mary  
*Elmira:* St. Mary  
*Fairport:* Church of the Assumption  
*Henrietta:* Good Shepherd  
*Ithaca:* St. Catherine of Siena  
*Manhattan:* Ascension, Blessed Sacrament, Holy Name of Jesus, St. Francis deSales, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Paul the Apostle  
*Pittsford:* Church of Transfiguration  
*Rochester:* Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica  
*Saratoga Springs:* St. Peter  
*Schenectady:* St. Luke  
*Syracuse:* St. Lucy, All Saints  
*Utica:* Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Historic Old St. John’s  
*Wading River:* St. John the Baptist

*Wantagh:* St. Frances de Chantal  
*West Islip:* Our Lady of Lourdes  
*Westbury:* St. Brigid

## North Carolina

*Charlotte:* St. Peter  
*Durham:* Immaculate Conception  
*Fayetteville:* St. Patrick  
*Raleigh:* St. Francis of Assisi

## Ohio

*Akron:* St. Bernard  
*Cincinnati:* St. George-St. Monica, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Francis de Sales  
*Cleveland:* Blessed Trinity, St. Malachi, St. Martha  
*Columbus:* St. Thomas More Newman Center, St. Francis of Assisi  
*Fairlawn:* St. Hilary  
*Mentor:* St. John Vianney  
*University Heights:* Church of Gesu  
*Westlake:* St. Ladislav  
*Wooster:* St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

## Oregon

*Beaverton:* Spirit of Grace  
*Portland:* St. Andrew, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Phillip Neri, Downtown Chapel (St. Vincent de Paul), St. Ignatius

## Pennsylvania

*Danville:* St. Joseph  
*Latrobe:* St. Vincent Basilica  
*Philadelphia:* Old St. Joseph, Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Vincent DePaul  
*Wilkesburg:* St. James

## Rhode Island

*Providence:* St. Raymond  
*Wickford:* St. Bernard

## Tennessee

*Memphis:* St. Patrick, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

## Texas

*Austin:* Univ. of Texas Catholic Center  
*Colleyville:* Good Shepherd  
*Dallas:* Holy Trinity  
*El Paso:* All Saints  
*Houston:* St. Anne, St. Teresa  
*Odessa:* St. Elizabeth Ann Seton  
*Plano:* St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

## Virginia

*Arlington:* Our Lady Queen of Peace  
*Glen Allen:* St. Michael the Archangel  
*Mechanicsville:* Church of the Redeemer  
*Richmond:* Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Sacred Heart Parish

*Roanoke:* St. Gerard  
*Triangle:* St. Francis  
*Virginia Beach:* St. Nicholas

## Washington

*Seattle:* Christ Our Hope, St. Benedict, St. James Cathedral, St. Joseph, St. Mary’s  
*Spokane:* St. Aloysius  
*Tacoma:* St. Leo

## Wisconsin

*Fond du Lac:* Holy Family  
*Madison:* Our Lady Queen of Peace  
*Menomonee Falls:* Good Shepherd  
*Milwaukee:* St. Bernadette, Good Shepherd, Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes  
*Wauwatosa:* St. Pius X

## Outside the U.S.

### Canada

*Montreal:* Holy Cross, Saint-Pierre-Apôtre,  
*Ottawa:* St. Joseph  
*Toronto:* Our Lady of Lourdes

### England

## INTENTIONAL EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES

### Arizona

*Scottsdale:* Franciscan Renewal Center

### California

*Pleasanton:* Catholic Community of Pleasanton  
*San Diego:* Mary Magdalene Catholic Community  
*San Francisco:* Dignity/San Francisco

### District of Columbia

Communitas

### Florida

*Tampa:* Franciscan Center

### Iowa

*Coralville:* Full Circle Small Faith Community

### Maryland

*Baltimore, Annapolis, Thurmont:* Living Water Inclusive Catholic Community  
*Greenbelt:* Greenbelt Catholic Community

### Michigan

*Grand Rapids:* Marywood  
*Kalamazoo:* Lambda Catholic

### Minnesota

*Minneapolis:* Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community



*Bristol:* St. Nicholas of Tolentino  
*London:* Church of the Immaculate Conception (Mayfair)

### Ireland

*Dublin:* Orlagh in the City

### Northern Ireland

*Belfast:* Clonard Monastery Parish

### Ohio

*Dayton:* Living Beatitudes Community

### Oregon

*Portland:* Journey and Koinonia Catholic Community

### Pennsylvania

*Drexel Hill:* St. Mary Magdalene Community  
*Pittsburgh:* Dignity//Pittsburgh

### Virginia

*Arlington:* NOVA Catholic Community

### Washington

*Lacey:* Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community

### Wisconsin

*Madison:* Holy Wisdom Monastery  
*Milwaukee:* Mary of Magdala, Apostle to the Apostles

## Outside the U.S.

### Ireland

*Dublin:* Orlagh in the City

### Korea

*Seoul:* Alpha Omega Community

## 'It Is Not a Closet. It Is a Cage.' Gay Catholic Priests Speak Out

By Elizabeth Dias  
The New York Times  
February 17, 2019

MILWAUKEE — Gregory Greiten was 17 years old when the priests organized the game. It was 1982 and he was on a retreat with his classmates from St. Lawrence, a Roman Catholic seminary for teenage boys training to become priests. Leaders asked each boy to rank which he would rather be: burned over 90 percent of his body, paraplegic or gay.

Each chose to be scorched or paralyzed. Not one uttered the word "gay." They called the game the Game of Life.

The lesson stuck. Seven years later, he climbed up into his seminary dorm window and dangled one leg over the edge. "I really am gay," Father Greiten, now a priest near Milwaukee, remembered telling himself for the first time. "It was like a death sentence."

The closet of the Roman Catholic Church hinges on an impossible contradiction. For years, church leaders have driven gay congregants away in shame and insisted that "homosexual tendencies" are "disordered." And yet, thousands of the church's priests are gay.

The stories of gay priests are unspoken, veiled from the outside world, known only to one another, if they are known at all.

Fewer than about 10 priests in the United States have dared to come out publicly. But gay men probably make up at least 30 to 40 percent of the American Catholic clergy, according to dozens of estimates from gay priests themselves and researchers. Some priests say the number is closer to 75 percent. One priest in Wisconsin said he assumed every priest was gay unless he knows for a fact he is not. A priest in Florida put it this way: "A third are gay, a third are straight and a third don't know what the hell they are."

Two dozen gay priests and seminarians from 13 states shared intimate details of their lives in the Catholic closet with *The New York Times* over the past two months. They were interviewed in their churches before Mass, from art museums on the weekend, in their apartments decorated with rainbow neon lights and between classes at seminary. Some agreed to be photographed if their identities were concealed.

Almost all of them required strict confidentiality to speak without fear of retribution from their bishops or superiors. A few had been expressly forbidden to come out or even to speak about homosexuality. Most are in active ministry, and could lose more than their jobs if they are outed. The church almost always controls a priest's housing, health insurance and retirement pension. He could lose all three if his bishop finds his sexuality disqualifying, even if he is faithful to his vows of celibacy.

The environment for gay priests has grown only more dangerous. The fall of Theodore E. McCarrick, the once-powerful cardinal who was defrocked last week for sexual abuse of boys and young men, has inflamed accusations that homosexuality is to blame for the church's resurgent abuse crisis.

Studies repeatedly find there to be no connection between being gay and abusing children. And yet prominent bishops have singled out gay priests as the root of the problem, and right-wing media organizations attack what they

have called the church's "homosexual subculture," "lavender mafia," or "gay cabal."

Even Pope Francis has grown more critical in recent months. He has called homosexuality "fashionable," recommended that men with "this deep-seated tendency" not be accepted for ministry and admonished gay priests to be "perfectly responsible, trying to never create scandal."

**"It really never was my shame. It was the church's shame. They're the ones that should have the shame for what they have done to myself and many, many other L.G.B.T. people."**

—Father Greg Greiten

This week, Pope Francis will host a much-anticipated summit on sex abuse with bishops from around the world. The debate promises to be not only about holding bishops accountable but also about homosexuality itself.

Just a few years ago, this shift was almost unimaginable. When Pope Francis uttered his revolutionary question, "Who am I to judge?" in 2013, he tempted the closet door to swing open. A cautious few priests stepped through.

But if the closet door cracked, the sex abuse crisis now threatens to slam it shut. Widespread scapegoating has driven many priests deeper into the closet.

"The vast majority of gay priests are not safe," said Father Bob Bussen, a priest in Park City, Utah, who was outed about 12 years ago after he held Mass for the L.G.B.T.Q. community.

"Life in the closet is worse than scapegoating," he said. "It is not a closet. It is a cage."

"You can be taught to act straight in order to survive."

Even before a priest may know he is gay, he knows the closet. The code is taught early, often in seminary. Numquam duo, semper tres, the warning goes. Never two, always three. Move in trios, never as a couple. No going on walks alone together, no going to the movies in a pair. The higher-ups warned for years: Any male friendship is too dangerous, could slide into something sexual or could turn into what they called a "particular friendship."

"You couldn't have a particular friendship with a man, because you might end up being homosexual," explained a priest, who once nicknamed his friends "the P.F.s." "And you couldn't have a friendship with a woman, because you might end up falling in love, and they were both against celibacy. With whom do you have a relationship that would be a healthy human relationship?"

Today, training for the priesthood in the United States usually starts in or after college. But until about 1980, the church often recruited boys to start in ninth grade — teenagers still in the throes of puberty. For many of today's priests and bishops over 50, this environment limited healthy sexual development. Priests cannot marry, so sexuality from the start was about abstinence, and obedience.

The sexual revolution happening out-

side seminary walls might as well have happened on the moon, and national milestones in the fight for gay rights, like the Stonewall riots, on Mars.

One priest in a rural diocese said the rules reminded him of how his elementary school forced left-handed students to write with their right hand. "You can be taught to act straight in order to survive," he said.

"I can still remember seeing a seminarian come out of another's room at 5 a.m. and thinking, isn't it nice, they talked all night," the same priest said. "I was so naïve."

Priests in America tend to come out to themselves at a much later age than the national average for gay men, 15. Many gay priests spoke of being pulled between denial and confusion, finally coming out to themselves in their 30s or 40s.

Father Greiten was 24 when he realized he was gay and considered jumping from his dorm window. He did not jump, but confided his despair in a classmate. His friend came out himself. It was a revelation: There were other people studying to be priests who were gay. It was just that no one talked about it.

He reached out to a former seminary professor who he thought might also be a gay man.

"There will be a time in your life when you will look back on this and you're going to just love yourself for being gay," Father Greiten remembered this man telling him.

"I thought, 'This man must be totally insane.'"

But he had discovered the strange irony of the Catholic closet — it isn't secret at all.

"It's kind of like an open closet," Father Greiten said. "It's the making of it public, and speaking about it, where it becomes an issue."

One priest, whose parish has no idea he is gay, remembered a backyard cocktail party a few years ago where fellow priests were saying "vile" things about a gay bishop. He intervened, and came out to them. He lost three friends that night. "I broke the code by announcing to them that I was gay," he said. "It was a conspiracy of silence."

That is a reason many of the men are out to only a few close friends. The grapevine has taught them which priests in their diocese are gay, whom to trust and whom to fear.

All priests must wrestle with their vows of celibacy, and the few priests who are publicly out make clear they are chaste.

Still, many priests said they had had sex with other men to explore their sexual identity. Some have watched pornography to see what it is like for two men to have sex. They ultimately found more anguish than pleasure.

One priest had sex for the first time at 62, no strings attached, with a man he met online. The relationship was discovered and reported to his bishop, and he has not had sex since. Another priest, when asked if he had ever considered himself as having a partner, wondered what that even

meant. He paused, before mentioning one very special friend. "I fell in love several times with men," he said. "I knew from the beginning it wasn't going to last."

Though open, the closet means that many priests have held the most painful stories among themselves for decades: The seminarian who died by suicide, and the matches from a gay bar found afterward in his room. The priest friends who died of AIDS. The feeling of coming home to an empty rectory every night.

So they find ways to encourage one another. They share books like Father James Martin's groundbreaking "Building a Bridge," on the relationship between the Catholic and L.G.B.T. communities. Some have signed petitions against church-sponsored conversion therapy programs, or have met on private retreats, after figuring out how to conceal them on their church calendars. Occasionally, a priest may even take off his collar and offer to unofficially bless a gay couple's marriage.

Some may call this rebellion. But "it is not a cabal," one priest said. "It is a support group."

Just over a year ago, after meeting with a group of gay priests, Father Greiten decided it was time to end his silence. At Sunday Mass, during Advent, he told his suburban parish he was gay, and celibate. They leapt to their feet in applause.

His story went viral. A 90-year-old priest called him to say he had lived his entire life in the closet and longed for the future to be different. A

**"I was in my 50s when I came out. I entered the seminary at 18, a young, enthusiastic, white, male virgin who doesn't know anything, let alone straight or gay. There were years that I carried this secret. My prayer was not that, would God change me. It was that I would die before anyone found out."**

—Father Bob Bussen

woman wrote from Mississippi, asking him to move south to be her priest.

To some church leaders, that outpouring of support may have been even more threatening than his sexuality.

Father Greiten had committed the cardinal sin: He opened the door to debate. His

archbishop, Jerome E. Listecki of Milwaukee, issued a statement saying that he

wished Father Greiten had not gone public. Letters poured in calling him "satanic," "gay filth" and a "monster" who sodomized children.

The idea that gay priests are responsible for child sexual abuse remains a persistent belief, especially in many conservative Catholic circles. For years, church leaders have been deeply confused about the relationship between gay men and sexual abuse. With every new abuse revelation, the tangled threads of the church's sexual culture become even more impossible to sort out.

Study after study shows that homosexuality is not a predictor of child molestation. This is also true for priests, according to a famous study by John Jay College of Criminal Justice in the wake of revelations in 2002 about child sex abuse in the church. The John Jay research, which church leaders commissioned, found that same-sex experience did not make priests more likely to abuse minors, and that four out of five people who said they were victims were male. Researchers found no single cause for this abuse, but identified that abusive priests' extensive access to boys had been critical to their choice of victims.

The notion that a certain sexual identity leads to abusive behavior has demoralized gay priests for decades. Days after one man retired, he still could not shake what his archbishop in the 1970s told all

(Continued on page 8)

# In Scotland, Catholic Education Service Works to Make Schools LGBTI Inclusive

By Robert Shine

*Bondings 2.0*

Www.NewWaysMinistry.org/blog  
March 12, 2019

A key church official in Scotland has affirmed Catholics' participation in developing standards for the country's new LGBT curriculum, reportedly the first such standards to be implemented in the world and which set a model for Catholic education around the globe.

Barbara Coupar, director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES), wrote in the *Scottish Catholic Observer* about church officials' participation in the development and now implementation of a new LGBT-focused curriculum. Coupar said being a member of the working group behind the new standards was "extremely important" given Catholic schools would inevitably be affected. She said Catholic schools wanted to help ensure all students feel safe and included, explaining:

"The group considered the five pledges of the TIE [Time for Inclusive Education] campaign. There are aspects of the campaign that resonate with all Catholic schools, including the desire to have well trained staff within schools who feel confident and equipped to meet the needs of pupils and to address ineffective use of recording of LGBTI bullying.

"In addition, all Catholic schools see a need for quality lessons to tackle prejudice and to find ways to assist schools to improve their equalities policies, so as to better reflect under represented protected characteristics, as outlined in the 2010 Equality Act. . .

"So what are we going to do and how are we going to do it? Catholic schools are unequivocal in their care for all the children and young people in the school community, and support each one individually, even if their choices differ from the Catholic vision of human sexuality."

The standards will apply to all



schools in Scotland, secular and religious. A key focus for Catholic educators will be discrimination and hate crimes. New resources have been designed to complement existing curricula on religion and morality, and will focus on tackling "the root cause of bullying, hate crime and intolerance in a holistic way." Coupar added:

"By exploring Church teaching, the dignity of the human person and Catholic Social Teaching, pupils are equipped to challenge behaviour and language that does not respect each individual, to articulate why the Church teaches that injustice is wrong, and to critically evaluate the messages that society gives through the media and social platforms about the dignity of the human person.

"We hope that, through our approach, our Catholic education community can contribute to the goal of eradicating all hate crimes, injustice and prejudiced based intolerance in Scotland."

Coupar defended the Church's participation against those who claim doing so weakens Catholic identity or opposes Church teaching. Participating in the working group helped ensure both that religiously-affiliated schools would still be able to teach their values while ensuring every student learns about LGBT

issues:

"Within the working group it was acknowledged that some members would not necessarily agree with each other on all matters, but that consensus was possible.

"It is a testimony to the respectful atmosphere and the determination of each member of the group to arrive at a mutually acceptable consensus that the recommendations were reached.

"SCES and the University of Glasgow, (through the St Andrew's Foundation), are all sure that the members of the working group are sincere in the aspiration to implement the recommendations in a way that will allow all schools, teachers and parents to participate and engage in full conscience according to their religious belief."

Scottish church officials' choice to prioritize students' flourishing with a focus on the Church's social justice teachings is precisely the approach every educator in Catholic education should take. If the curriculum is implemented with this same focus on Catholic Social Teaching, students will get a lesson not only on LGBT issues and anti-bullying, but a moral framework with which to approach such issues throughout their lifetime. Such lessons greatly benefit not only LGBT students; they help all students grow in their appreciation for and understanding of sexuality, gender, non-discrimination, and respect for human dignity. Barbara Coupar and her colleagues should be commended for their work, which now exists as one more positive model for LGBT issues in Catholic education worldwide. ✦

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## LGBT-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

Below is a list of known LGBT-friendly Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic institutions that have some type of gay/LGBT student group, support group, ally group, etc. If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to LGBT people, please let us know.



<b>Alabama</b> <i>Mobile:</i> Spring Hill College	<b>Iowa</b> <i>Davenport:</i> St. Ambrose University <i>Dubuque:</i> Loras College, Clarke University	<b>Montana</b> <i>Helena:</i> Carroll College	<b>Pennsylvania</b> <i>Cresson:</i> Mount Aloysius College <i>Dallas:</i> Misericordia University <i>Erie:</i> Mercyhurst College <i>Greensburg:</i> Seton Hill University <i>Immaculata:</i> Immaculata University <i>Philadelphia:</i> Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's Univ. <i>Pittsburgh:</i> Carlow University, Duquesne University <i>Radnor:</i> Cabrini College <i>Reading:</i> Alvernia University <i>Scranton:</i> Marywood University <i>Villanova:</i> Villanova University
<b>California</b> <i>Belmont:</i> Notre Dame de Namur University <i>Goleta:</i> St. Mark's University <i>Los Angeles:</i> Loyola Marymount University, Mount Saint Mary's College <i>Moraga:</i> St. Mary's College <i>Oakland:</i> Holy Names University <i>Rancho Palos Verde:</i> Marymount College <i>San Diego:</i> University of San Diego <i>San Francisco:</i> University of San Francisco <i>Santa Clara:</i> Santa Clara University	<b>Kentucky</b> <i>Louisville:</i> Spalding University, Bellarmino University	<b>Nebraska</b> <i>Omaha:</i> Creighton University	<b>Rhode Island</b> <i>Newport:</i> Salve Regina University <i>Providence:</i> Providence College
<b>Colorado</b> <i>Denver:</i> Regis University	<b>Louisiana</b> <i>New Orleans:</i> Loyola University	<b>New Hampshire</b> <i>Manchester:</i> St. Anselm College <i>Nashua:</i> Rivier College	<b>Texas</b> <i>Austin:</i> Saint Edward's University <i>San Antonio:</i> University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake Univ.
<b>Connecticut</b> <i>Fairfield:</i> Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University <i>New Haven:</i> Albertus Magnus College <i>West Hartford:</i> Saint Joseph College	<b>Maryland</b> <i>Baltimore:</i> Notre Dame of Maryland University, Loyola University of Maryland	<b>New Jersey</b> <i>Caldwell:</i> Caldwell College <i>Jersey City:</i> St. Peter's College <i>Newark:</i> Seton Hall School of Law	<b>Vermont</b> <i>Colchester:</i> Saint Michael's College
<b>District of Columbia</b> Georgetown University, Trinity University	<b>Massachusetts</b> <i>Boston:</i> Emmanuel College, Chestnut Hill: Boston College <i>Chicopee:</i> Elms College <i>Easton:</i> Stonehill College <i>North Andover:</i> Merrimack College <i>Weston:</i> Regis College <i>Worcester:</i> Assumption College, College of the Holy Cross	<b>New York</b> <i>Albany:</i> College of Saint Rose <i>Brooklyn and Patchogue:</i> St. Joseph's College <i>Bronx:</i> Fordham University, Manhattan College <i>Buffalo:</i> Canisius College <i>Loudonville:</i> Siena College <i>New Rochelle:</i> College of New Rochelle, Iona College <i>Poughkeepsie:</i> Marist College <i>Rochester:</i> St. John Fisher College <i>St. Bonaventure:</i> St. Bonaventure Univ. <i>Sparkill:</i> St. Thomas Aquinas College <i>Syracuse:</i> LeMoyne College <i>Queens:</i> St. John's University	<b>Washington</b> <i>Lacey:</i> St. Martin's College <i>Seattle:</i> Seattle University <i>Spokane:</i> Gonzaga University
<b>Florida</b> <i>Miami Gardens:</i> St. Thomas University <i>Miami Shores:</i> Barry University	<b>Michigan</b> <i>Detroit:</i> University of Detroit Mercy, Marygrove College <i>Grand Rapids:</i> Aquinas College	<b>Ohio</b> <i>Cincinnati:</i> Xavier University <i>Cleveland Heights:</i> John Carroll University <i>Dayton:</i> University of Dayton <i>Pepper Pike:</i> Ursuline College <i>South Euclid:</i> Notre Dame College <i>Sylvania:</i> Lourdes College	<b>West Virginia</b> <i>Wheeling:</i> Wheeling Jesuit University
<b>Hawaii</b> <i>Honolulu:</i> Chaminade University	<b>Minnesota</b> <i>Collegeville:</i> St. John's University <i>Duluth:</i> College of St. Scholastica <i>Minneapolis:</i> College of St. Catherine <i>St. Joseph:</i> College of Saint Benedict <i>St. Paul:</i> St. Thomas University <i>Winona:</i> St. Mary's University of Minnesota	<b>Oregon</b> <i>Marylhurst:</i> Marylhurst University <i>Portland:</i> University of Portland	<b>Wisconsin</b> <i>De Pere:</i> St. Norbert College <i>Madison:</i> Edgewood College <i>Milwaukee:</i> Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University
<b>Illinois</b> <i>Chicago:</i> DePaul University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University <i>Joliet:</i> University of St. Francis <i>River Forest:</i> Dominican University in Illinois <i>Romeoville:</i> Lewis University	<b>Missouri</b> <i>Kansas City:</i> Avila University, Rockhurst University <i>St. Louis:</i> Fontbonne University, Maryville University, St. Louis University		<b>Canada</b> <i>Toronto:</i> Regis College
<b>Indiana</b> <i>Notre Dame:</i> Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, Univ. of Notre Dame			

## Why I Stay: Pushing Back Against Those Who Would Treat Us Like Dogs

By Jacqui O.  
Bondings 2.0

www.NewWaysMinistry.org/blog  
January 20, 2019

*New Ways Ministry invited readers to share the stories of their relationship with the Catholic Church by writing on the theme of "Why We Came, Why We Left, Why We Stayed." We asked how they would like to be identified in terms of name and gender/sexual identity, location. Anonymity was offered as an option.*

I was in Tyre, Lebanon, when I learned that Jesus visited Tyre once.

I was familiar with the story, but I hadn't paid attention to the location. A woman—maybe Canaanite, maybe Syro-Phoenician—comes to Jesus and asks him to heal her daughter. (Matthew 15: 21-28)

And he sends her away. He calls her

a dog. He's here for the children, the lost sheep of Israel.

I went to Maronite Mass in Tyre because it felt less threatening than Mass at home. I called it a cultural experience, an opportunity for language immersion. But when the priest read the Gospel—"Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters"—it felt like the wind had been knocked out of me.

I've read a lot of interpretations of the Canaanite woman's story. Maybe Jesus was testing her? Maybe he was acting something out for the disciples' benefit? This does not satisfy me. These answers do not justify the unspeakable cruelty of the exchange.

I do not know the answer to the question—but I do know that the story is a question. It is my question. The question I have carried since I was told that the Bread of Life could not enter this queer body of mine. "Lord, I am not



worthy...." but I must be particularly unworthy.

Why does the mercy of God fall so heavily on some while the rest of us crawl in the dust begging for that mercy—begging to be treated like dogs if not human beings? How do you find faith in a God whose disciples would send you away?

The woman doesn't get answers, but she does receive mercy. She asks for crumbs and God gives her abundance.

I asked God for crumbs in that dusty Maronite church that smelled like a psalm, and he gave me bread. I haven't stopped taking the Eucharist since, and I go to Mass in English now.

Maybe the Church is like Jesus in this moment, and there's some deep, mysterious reason why it tries to send me away. But I know my part. Like the woman in Tyre, I'm here to push back. I'm here to stay. †

## 'We are all children of God,' nun writes allowing same-sex union news in alumnae mag

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were not allowed. Now, that has changed.

Berchmans alluded to that change with a quote from St. Francis de Sales, which she chose to begin her letter:

"The Church is a garden patterned with unlimited flowers; it is necessary that they should be of various sizes, various colors, various odors, and, to sum it up, different perfections . . . all of them provide a beauty most pleasing and perfect."

Her letter went on to address the Catholic Church's teaching on same-sex marriage and its emphasis on the Gospel's command to love one another.

"As a professed Sister of the Visitation for 67 years, I have devoted my life in service to the Catholic Church," she wrote. "The Church is clear in its teaching on same-sex marriages. But, it is equally clear in its teaching that we are all children of God, that we each have dignity and are worthy of respect and love."

"As I have prayed over this contradiction, I keep returning to this choice: we can focus on Church teaching on gay marriage or we can focus on Church teaching on the Gospel commandment of love. We know from history — including very recent history — that the Church, in its humanity, makes mistakes. Yet, through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, it learns and grows. And so, we choose the Gospel commandment of love."

Christina Peters, a 1980 Visitation graduate who is gay and married her

partner nine years ago when same-sex marriages became legal, said she was profoundly moved by Visitation's decision.

"To see the school stand with gay and lesbian students and parents and families, I just felt really emotional and grateful," Peters said. "I do suspect there will be people who will be upset and outraged about it, but Visitation has kind of made its point, and I don't think they're going to back off of it now."

Peters said she had a rich and positive experience at Visitation and is close to many of her former classmates.

But she also said the church's teaching on same-sex marriage was one of the reasons she did not send her daughters to Catholic school.

Berchmans declined an interview request. So far, there have been few complaints about the policy shift from students, parents and the school's alumnae, according to school officials.

"The response to Sister's letter has been huge. It has been overwhelmingly and heartwarming positive," said Caroline Coleman Handorf, the school's director of communications.

The Archdiocese of Washington said in a statement it was not made aware of the school's decision before the letter from Berchmans was sent. Although Visitation is independent, the archdiocese said in its statement:

"The archdiocese has a clear responsibility to ensure independent Catholic schools maintain their authentic Catholic identity and provide advice and guidance on such matters as they arise. In the past,

Georgetown Visitation has consulted the archdiocese on matters related to upholding Catholic identity, and therefore, it is especially disappointing that this consultation and collaboration was not followed."

It continued, "Catholic Church teaching on marriage is clear, and it also does not conflict with the Gospel message of love."

A parent of a current student, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because she worried she would be targeted for her comments, said she was disappointed with the school's decision and that she and other parents are concerned about their children's Catholic formation at the school. She said that opposition to the new policy is "widespread" and that many parents are still deciding how they will react.

"We chose to send our children to a Catholic school, through great sacrifice, as the tuition is pretty high, because we want Catholic doctrine and Catholic values instilled in our children before they head out into the world," she said. "The Church's teachings on matters of sexuality are healthy and give our girls great grounding. We feel the Catholic faith is really crucial to these girls' successes, and . . . a lot of us are feeling very cheated right now."

Founded in 1799, Visitation is one of the oldest Catholic girls schools in the United States. Annual tuition for the 500 students at the 23-acre campus in Georgetown is \$30,100. A monastery on the grounds is home to 14 Visitation sisters, although none of them is a faculty

member.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, an advocacy group for LGBTQ Catholics, said he was not aware of any other Catholic high school alumni magazines that include announcements of same-sex unions. He described the letter from Berchmans as "beautiful and very powerful."

"This is a really big step forward," DeBernardo said. "This is something that all Catholic schools are eventually going to have to deal with, sooner rather than later. Marriage equality is a reality. Too often, Catholic leaders try to bury their heads and pretend this is not a reality, but it is."

Jenny Baker Moore, a 1990 Visitation graduate who lives in McLean, Va., and whose family has deep ties to the school, said the change was overdue.

"Things happen at a snail's pace in the Catholic Church, so this is a big deal," she said. "I love the school, and I'm glad they've finally done this."

Although there has been widespread support for the school's position, some Visitation graduates in the Facebook discussion said the letter from Berchmans should be used as a springboard for the school to address additional issues of diversity, inclusion and equity.

"This stirred up a lot of pain for some people," said Elizabeth Early, a 1992 graduate who lives in Washington and participated in the Facebook chat group. "It kind of created a big storm beyond just the awareness and acknowledgment of gay marriage. We need to look at what more the school can do." †

## In Groundbreaking Article, Gay Catholic Priests Speak Out

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the new priests headed to their first parish assignments. "He said, 'I don't ever want you to call me to report about your pastor, unless he is a homo or an alcoholic,'" he said, referring to an alcoholic. "He didn't even know what he meant when he said homo, because we were all homos. He meant a predator, like serial predator."

This perception persists today at prominent Catholic seminaries. At the largest in the United States, Mundelein Seminary in Illinois, few ever talk about sexual identity, said one gay student, who is afraid to ever come out. Since last summer, when Mr. McCarrick was exposed for abusing young men, students have been drilled in rules about celibacy and the evils of masturbation and pornography.

"Classmates will say, 'Don't admit gays,'" said the student. "Their attitude is that it is gay priests who inflict abuse on younger guys."

Priests across the country are wondering if their sacrifice is worth the personal cost. "Am I going to leave the priesthood because I'm sick of that accusation?" asked Father Michael Shanahan, a Chicago priest who came out publicly three

years ago. "Become more distant from parishioners? Am I going to hide? Become hardened, and old?"

Blaming gay men for sexual abuse is almost sure to be a major topic this week at the Vatican, at a much-anticipated four-day summit on sexual abuse. Pope Francis has called the world's

most powerful bishops to Rome to educate them on the problems of abuse, after high-profile abuse cases in the United States, Australia, Chile and elsewhere.

The event has worried gay priests. A few years after the 2002 scandal, the Vatican banned gay men from seminaries and ordination. When the abuse crisis

broke out again last summer, the former Vatican ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, accused "homosexual networks" of American cardinals of secretly working to protect abusers. And this week, a sensational book titled "Sodoma" in Europe ("In the

Closet of the Vatican" in the United States) is being released that claims to expose a vast gay subculture at the Vatican.

A group of gay priests in the Netherlands recently took the unusually bold step of writing to Pope Francis, urging him to allow gay, celibate men to be ordained.

"Instead of seeing increased accountability on the parts of the bishops, it could become once again a

condemnation of lesbian, gay, transsexual people within the church," John Coe, 63, a permanent deacon in Kentucky, who came out last year, said about the summit.

Sitting in his parish's small counseling room, Father Greiten reflected on it all. He wished he could talk to Pope Francis himself. "Listen to my story of how the church traumatized me for being a gay man," he asked, into the air.

"It's not just about the sexual abuse crisis," he said, his voice growing urgent. "They are sexually traumatizing and wounding yet another generation. We have to stand up and say no more sexual abuse, no more sexual traumatizing, no more sexual wounding. We have to get it right when it comes to sexuality."

For now, Father Greiten was getting ready for his 15th trip to Honduras with doctors and medical supplies. A shadow box hung on the wall behind him. It displayed a scrap of purple knitting, needle still stuck in the top. He calls it "The Unfinished Gift."

"What if every priest was truly allowed to live their life freely, openly, honestly?" he asked. "That's my dream." †

**"This is not the whole story of who I am. But if you don't want to know this about me, do you really want to know me? It's a question I'd invite the people of God to ponder."**

**—Father Steve Wolf**